

for tobacco which he may have doled out when he was in a good mood but you can bet he kept the pot on his own mantelpiece. He even charged a guinea extra for teaching children! I'd always pictured children having a lean time in the workhouse so it's quite a surprise to see the item of children 5s. for fairings. I wonder how many of them got a ride on the helter skelter for that five bob. Perhaps the more enterprising amongst them were in the habit of feigning illness to qualify for the Gills of wine that seem a rather more palatable remedy than a dose of Night Nurse or a couple of Paracetamol. The 14s. 6d spent on the coach to London for Ham's boys invites speculation if only for the vagueness of the entry. They would hardly make it there and back in a day so a quick dash round the tourist attractions seems unlikely. I guess Ham had managed to place them as apprentices with a wholesaler in the big city. A nice little earner for him no doubt. I see an entry for Nurse in the Pesthouse. I imagine there was not a lot of competition for this post. Was this a full time job or did she come on a temp contract? One conjures up scenes of unfortunates, bedridden with unmentionable afflictions, too horrid to share accommodation with the everyday sick.

With weddings today costing thousands, the nuptials at John Harrod's event costing £1. 12s. 6d. sound like a pretty mean affair. I expect young John found himself on the cusp of fatherhood and without the funds to do the right thing was steered along the path of moral obligation by the all embracing arm of the community. Ann Green might also have been aware of the signs of imminent motherhood when she hitch-hiked all the way to Colchester. The shame associated with her condition would be more easily born in a place where nobody knew her. She was generously sheltered by St Peter's who made sure nevertheless that the cost of her upkeep was reclaimed from Chelmsford. A similar situation may account for the payment of 9s. for clothes for Mott at Bocking. Young Mott may have been encouraged by rumours of a job going at Bocking when he migrated from his home town. Maybe sleeping rough in a pigsty on the journey, a new outfit of clothes was high on the list of priorities when he claimed shelter from his new village. I expect the bonnet provided for Eliz. Wright for 1s. 3d. was a necessity to maintain a decent appearance around the house. I don't see her mulling over the latest creations in the haberdashers and waving a docket for 1s. 3d at the assistant in millinery. By the same token, Dame Floyd's clogs at 7d. were not going to make any fashion statements.

The 7s. charge by Rev Mr Tindal for signing certificates will have invoked the envy, present even to day, that anyone should be able to extract money from hard working folk merely by signing his name. On the other hand, if the claimants for handouts from the public purse were anything like their modern counterparts, there would be no end to the ingenuity they got up to qualify for benefits. The overseers would have looked to the Vicar to protect their interests and consider his fee well spent.

David Stacy

GALLEYWOOD HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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PAST TIMES

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Another relic of our racing past is uncovered



The Hawthorn bush in the centre of our small picture is by the side of the track leading from Margaretting Road to the car park on the Common. Almost concealed by the tangle of brambles at its base is a concrete slab measuring roughly two metres long by one metre wide. At each corner are slots which would have once accommodated wooden posts. The platform supported by these posts was built at the finishing line of the race course and would have been used by the finishing judge.

Our next
meeting



The Horse and Groom

The History of Gray & Sons Rignals Lane Galleywood

Beer Wholesaler and Owner of 49 Public Houses in Essex
including The Horse and Groom Galleywood

Speaker

Michael Gray

Chairman Gray & Sons

Wednesday 7 June 2006

Keene Hall Watchouse Road at 8 pm

DATES for your Diary

2006

20 September

THE HISTORY OF LODGE FARMHOUSE
GALLEYWOOD

Originally constructed as a hunting lodge in an
ancient deer park overlooking the river Wid in the
early 14th century.

Speakers Ernest and Mark Tully

15 November

THE HISTORY OF INGATESTONE HALL
AND THORNDON HALL

Residences of the Petre Family since Tudor times
Speaker Lord Petre, Lord Lieutenant of Essex

The 18th Century Benefit Claimants

Some of the most revealing documents of Social History are the Poor Law Records. My tutor on the Local History course, the distinguished Arthur Brown, encouraged his students to interpret them 'with sympathy and imagination'. So one of the first documents that I looked at in the Essex Record Office was a set of Overseer's accounts for the parish of Great Baddow. Taken from the lift that brought it from the security of the archives, it was weighed so that not a page could escape undetected from the protection of the ERO. I passed over my reader's ticket in exchange for this carton secured by white tape and as I took out the long slim book I began to experience the fascination of holding in my hands the actual pages so studiously inscribed over two hundred years ago. Here were written the accounts of payments to real people who lived not a mile from my home. Payments funded by others in the village who could afford to do so. The detail was brief so I took up the challenge of Professor Brown and set about applying some 'sympathetic imagination'.

Ann Smith ill... 1s. Was Ann an ailing elderly widow that she seemed to have no husband to care for her? Was she living in the workhouse? Perhaps if she was a mature woman she would not have been referred to as 'Ann' but maybe given the benefit of 'Mrs' or even the rather cosy 'Goody'. What would the shilling have provided for her? She seemed not so unwell that a doctor was required to attend. *Mayhew* on the other hand was provided with a *Nurse... 7s. 6d.* and poor old *Jacob Warrinder* was despatched to *hospital... £2. 10s* This bill must have been several week's wages for a working man so the protective umbrella of the Overseers must have been a comfort to the poor and disadvantaged. No sign of a claim from his dependants during his spell as an in-patient so perhaps we can assume he was a widower. *Wool for shroud... 8d for Baker's boy* must have been a fairly commonplace item in those days of precarious childbirth as was the provision of *three coffins at 9s. each*. No mention of funeral expenses so these interments may have been carried out with little ceremony. The replacement of *two dozen spindles at 1d each for spinning wheel* was obviously necessary to keep turnover figures on target. Looks like the repairmen of those times had not gotten round to the idea of call-out charges and a minimum of one hour plus VAT. On the other hand was it really necessary to spend *14s. shaving the poor?* I wonder some eagle eyed Overseer didn't pick that one up and protest that they grow beards.

Thos Smith must have been comfortably situated to cough up *£20 for Mrs D's bastard child*. Did Mrs D find herself compromised while dusting the books in the library up at the big house I wonder? She was certainly granted anonymity in her distress, but today she would have sold her story to The Sun for a tidy bit more than the equivalent of £20. The *surgeon* presumably found himself better off taking *twenty guineas* as a retainer than making a charge for every call-out. It certainly cut down on the book-keeping. I wonder if the health of the inmates was, on the whole, better than the population outside.

Here's an intriguing entry - *£3. 9s. 8d spent relieving 151 men, women and children*. This looks like about twopence a head and must have been something pretty mundane to have been lumped together in this single entry. Bowls of soup maybe? The *governor* seemed to be doing alright on *£20 a year*. On a par with the doctor no less, and all those perks that came with the job. Free accommodation no doubt and a rake off from all the work produced by the inmates at the workhouse. Did he pocket the *11d for grinding 11 bushels of malt in house?* There's a charge made